



OFFICE OF GOVERNOR PAT QUINN

NEWS

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Governor Quinn Teams with US Cultural Ambassador Kareem Abdul-Jabbar to Support STEM Education

Governor and Basketball Great Join Business Leaders for Community Discussion about Education

CHICAGO – March 18, 2012. With March Madness in full swing, Governor Pat Quinn today teamed up with the NBA's All-Time Leading Scorer and U.S. Global Cultural Ambassador Kareem Abdul-Jabbar to encourage children to pursue Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) learning in Illinois. Studies show STEM education helps close the achievement gap and better prepares students for success in college and their careers, which are key parts of Governor Quinn's agenda to improve education in Illinois. Abdul-Jabbar, a New York Times best-selling author, co-wrote the children's book *"What Color is my World? - The Lost History of African American Inventors"* which promotes STEM innovation and learning among children.

"Our schools and education systems must always put our children first," Governor Quinn said. "STEM gives students in Illinois and throughout the United States the tools they need to be competitive in the global economy of today and tomorrow."

"If America is to maintain our high standard of living, we must continue to innovate," said Abdul-Jabbar. "We are competing with nations many times our size and STEM learning represents the engines of innovation. With these engines we can lead the world, because knowledge is real power."

Several heads of Illinois-based corporations joined Abdul-Jabbar and Governor Quinn at Martin Luther King, Jr. College Preparatory High School to participate in a public dialogue with students about the important roles education and perseverance play in their future. They also presented the school with a \$5,000 grant for new textbooks, ensuring that these students have the resources they need to succeed.

"The importance of attracting our young people to science, technology, engineering and math is undeniable as companies such as Navistar seek the talent needed to grow and prosper," said Greg Elliott, Navistar senior vice president of HR and Administration. "Navistar's decision to expand in Illinois was rooted in our belief that we have great talent in this state, and today's event is evidence of the collective commitment to Illinois' education."

"When I'm hiring, one of the most important things I look for is a good education," said John Griffin Jr., President of AGB Investigative Services, one of the Midwest's leading minority-owned cyber security firms. "Students who learn about information technology and computers at an earlier age have a leg up because the skills they have are what companies need to compete in today's economy."

"A. Finkl & Sons is pleased to participate in the Governor's initiative to encourage the study of science, technology, engineering and math in our schools. Encouraging students at an early age makes a huge difference, and teachers can use more tools that engage our children, such as Kareem Abdul-Jabar's book," said Bruce Liimatainen, Chairman and CEO.

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Academic focus in STEM areas have proven to foster innovation and provide students with the building blocks to succeed scholastically and professionally. The solution for long term economic growth points to a strong STEM workforce. Increased proficiency in these realms gives students an advantage in the 21st century global marketplace.

Under Governor Quinn's leadership, state officials have begun to implement a statewide initiative known as the STEM Learning Exchange to focus on educating and training students in nine key career fields, including: health science, agriculture, food and natural resources, information technology, finance, architecture and construction, transportation, distribution and logistics, manufacturing, research and developmental energy.

The program involves strong collaboration between pre-K-12 schools, colleges and professionals in each of the nine STEM fields to provide students with targeted resources such as internships and other work-based learning opportunities. Students also can also connect with adult mentors and apply what they learn in the classroom to a career. The program will launch in fall of 2012, and is funded through federal Race to the Top education funds.

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